



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

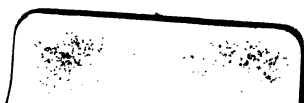
TRUE RELIGION.

1419
f. 771



600102158N

1119.4



ON
TRUE RELIGION:

HOW IT IS TO BE SOUGHT,

AND

HOW IT IS TO BE SECURED.

BY

EDGAR ELDRED, JUN. ,

LONDON:

J. HADDON, 3 BOUVERIE STREET, FLEET STREET.

1859.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. OF TRUE AND FALSE WORSHIP	5
II. THE TRINITY	11
III. ON PRAYER	16
IV. THE BIBLE	24
V. THE DUTIES OF LIFE	29
VI. OF RELIGION	46
VII. OF CONTROVERSY	59

ON

TRUE RELIGION.

I. OF TRUE AND FALSE WORSHIP.

IN all periods of the world's history since the fall of Adam, man has worshipped some object or being as a deity. Zoroaster and his priests bent the knee before fire, as an all-powerful, all-consuming power; while the Chinese, probably, had partly preceded them in their form of adoration, and partly in rendering worship to the sun, moon, and stars.

The Egyptians followed closely in their footsteps, but with an increased knowledge of Nature and her works of necessity, found that the worship of the celestial bodies, when accompanied by an acquaintance with the laws by which they are apparently governed, requires the acknowledgment of a supreme and directing mind. Instead of seeking the required source of vital direction in a spiritual form, the Egyptians strangely seemed to prefer

creating forms, that to themselves doubtlessly realised their ideas of a superior mind; and we well-informed, highly-blessed ones of modern days, can scarcely look upon those huge effigies of gods once worshipped by a mighty race, without feeling that they do possess a somewhat immaculate aspect. The stern, stolid expression of the features, with the calm, impenetrable brow, speaks, it seems, of infinity,—past infinity to come.

Still they turn away; they are but the work of human hands—they are but blocks of stone—perishable, like all other things in this perishable world; and these mighty forms of solemn aspect give rise alone to thoughts of the deepest commiseration.

Unhappily there are those still upon this globe who worship carved images of what they believe to be the god to whom they feel they should render adoration. But yet withal, is it not an indirect proof of the existence of a God that these nations should feel an obligation to worship some being?

Again, too, can we not see that slowly, but surely, one religion, and one religion only, although divided by what will eventually be seen to be the weak ineffectual strivings of man, is being preached throughout the whole world?—it may seem slowly, but how surely.*

And we Christians in England assist as instru-

* Matt. xxiv. 14.

ments in the Supreme Being's hand, in carrying out the Divine intentions to one end, while so many among us are endeavouring to overreach each other with cunningly-devised schemes!

Each sect is striving for itself against others, not only at home, but also by missionaries abroad, and how few think that with this very animosity, God is carrying out the propagation of True Religion; and that although the differences in each sect are great to us, they may possibly in the sight of the Superior Being be very small.*

The God worshipped by all Christians in every land—the God of the Presbyterian, of the Roman Catholic, of the Episcopalian, of the Congregationalist, of the Baptist,—is, or should be the same.†

Surely all know of one and the same creating, all-sustaining Spirit. All Christians believe in the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God. All who *feel* religion must *feel* that the Being they worship is the creator of all around them, and not alone that, but also that there is still evidence of His presence in all things. That the air we breathe, which brings life with every respiration, is but an evidence of the omnipresent all-sustaining power of God. That the wind which passes over the face of the earth to refresh and re-invigorate us, comes leaving with it evidence of the presence of God. That the animals and birds

* 1 Cor. xii. 11, 13.

† 1 Cor. xii. 5.

around us are indeed sustained in life by some unseen, all-powerful Being. That the beetle which creeps across our path has in it a portion (I speak with deep reverence) of this all-pervading Spirit. That the mist which slowly rolls from the mountain-top is but a part giving evidence of that creating and sustaining nature evident in all the universe.

How differently would most of us act, how differently think and feel, were we mentally assured that all around us was pervaded by perfect goodness! What emotions any of us possess to what we otherwise should do, when we once attain to acknowledge that we are ever surrounded and sustained, in our every thought, word and action by an all-powerful Spirit; who is indeed present in ourselves and in all things around us! And that we must render all our thoughts, words, and actions, to His service.

How kind it should make us to all around us! How constantly would we have the Creator of ourselves and all things before us! How much more frequently should we think of the sustaining Spirit that pervades all nature, and how deeply should we feel gratitude for the evidences of love evinced towards us in everything! A portion of God's creative sustaining Spirit is present in all things; God is indeed a Spirit, living and breathing with us, not afar off, as we would far too willingly think,

but around and beside us at all times.* With such a God, with such a Being, ever near; not as a worldly mother leaving her child, though it be but for only a very few seconds. He never leaves us. In sleep, in the confined workshop, in the dungeon, in the palace, by the seashore, and on the highest pinnacle of some snow-clad mountain, this same sustaining Spirit is with us alike. Evident in the nature around us—evident in ourselves. When the hand is upraised in anger, He is with us in the still small voice of conscience: when we are in business in the toil of life, He is beside us when acting honestly, and doing to our fellow-men as we would be done by. In the time of trial, in sweet moments of heartfelt happiness, in the hour of prayer, have we not known and felt the presence of our God?

Have not many among us distinctly known an answer to prayer, and felt the presence of God when alone in the silence of our chamber?† Or when walking in the fields have we not known evidence of His presence in the incense of the breathing spring? Have we not observingly felt that the sap of the trees was reflowing upwards, and the air charged with the most life-giving constituents? The joyful twittering of the little birds, the deep blue sky, telling of an infinite distance immeasurable by our knowledge, unappreciable by

* John iv. 23, 24.

† 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

our thought. Observing all this, and feeling more, has not our spirit within us answered the appeal to adoration from the Spirit which gave it life? Have not many among us felt, when thus amid all the beauties of early spring, more inclined, more willing to worship the Giver of all mercies than at any other time? Is this right?

If God is evident in the beauty of spring, amid fields and flowers, surely He is quite as manifest to any mind that has the power of thought in the crowded city when the wind blows, and the snow falls quickly on the well-trod pavement. Surely God is manifest in the power which He grants man to move, to toil, and to build; and in the wonderful beauty of form evident in each frozen gem of snow.

Are not the minds and bodies of men immediate creations of God? Therefore, buildings, machines, in fact, everything is an evidence of the presence of the same all-creating, all-sustaining Spirit, although it may be what is commonly known as a work of art, as much as if it were a gorgeous scene in some eastern land, a sunrise seen from the sea-shore, or the twinkling light of a far-off world in the still darkness of night.

II. THE TRINITY.

To endeavour to imagine, even in thought, the nature and form of God is to err. The human mind in so doing strives to overreach time and space, and therefore of necessity recoils upon itself, unequal to the attempted task.

A Being eternal, infinite, and ever beside us, is beyond our comprehension. We can understand His existence before our time: but eternity as mortals we cannot understand. We can perceive that an Infinite Spirit is evident in all creation; but we cannot imagine all that is possible to be done by such an One. The last-mentioned attribute of omnipresence is as impossible for us to clearly understand as the other two, for it is dependent upon them.

We believe God to be a Spirit; we know Him, also, from many passages in the Scriptures, to be a Godhead, consisting of three powers, or persons, of equal power, and coexistent, but different in their attributes; spoken of as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Jehovah * is taken to mean the Trinity. This Trinity in Unity, and this unity or oneness of three

* Exodus vi. 3.

Beings is what most persons speak of as an insurmountable difficulty in religion.

Paul the apostle tells us to compare spiritual things with spiritual.* We will endeavour to do so. If we read the first chapter of the writings of John the Evangelist we shall find God spoken of as the light of the world, and in the 5th verse of the first chapter of the first general epistle of John we can see he distinctly speaks of God as light.†

By studying the works of God closely, we find in light a perfect emblem of the Trinity. The ordinary daylight comes to us (to me) as a life-bearing evidence of the existence and near presence of God.

Light,† white light or daylight, is made up of three primary lights—red light, blue light, and yellow light; each taken separately light: each perfect in itself, and yet when united forming a beautifully harmonious whole—white light.

Let us follow closer the teaching of the type. The distinctive colours of the lights are but three attributes; so we have three lights each with its respective attribute.

Each light equal (nearly so as found by experi-

* 1 Cor. ii. 13.

† Light is said to be composed of seven colours; but this is untrue, for all the colours of the solar spectrum, as seen in the rainbow, are but three—red, blue, and yellow. Any person who observes a dew-drop, an icicle, or a piece of cut-glass, will perceive that white light is made up of different coloured lights.

ment) in power, existing together in harmony for the furtherance of the same wise ends.

The light composed of red rays giving heat and supporting life throughout nature. The light composed of blue rays induces change, and saves animal and vegetable matter from ultimate destruction by a transference into other forms. While the yellow rays of light illumine and soften the action of the other two, and shed their power alike throughout the universe.

Each one of these sets of rays (so to speak) can combine with one of the other sets, and in so doing always produces a new colour. For instance, blue and yellow light produce green light when brought in contact with each other. And in each possible case of conjunction between two lights a different colour or attribute of light is produced.

We have thus seen that by taking a biblical type, and bringing knowledge gained from our observations of nature to bear upon it, we learn that in light, which is near us daily, we have a perfect, and not difficult to be understood, emblem of the Trinity.

For we see that three lights exist in daylight—each a light in itself, and yet the three together forming but one light.* It being, therefore, evident on earth that three lights can be to us as one light; and one light, pure and perfect, contain

* 1 John v. 7, 8.

within it three lights, cannot, then, three Spirits be one Spirit, each perfect in himself, and with divine attributes? and one Spirit be the perfect unison of three Spirits, carrying out divine works with three attributes in perfect mercy, justice, and love.*

Still, however, we must ever humbly remember that a finite mind can never understand, can never imagine, the power and unlimitedness of an infinite one.

We know and believe God the Father to be the creating and all-sustaining Spirit evident in all things, present in all things, and the source of light, motion, and life, throughout the universe.†

To discover the existence of God the Saviour from a religion solely derived from the evidences of a creator in the works of nature around us would be impossible. Still the decay of all things, and yet evident mercy apparent throughout in the adaptedness of each to its purpose, and to the harmony and happiness of all, would, perhaps, to a certain extent, give presumptive evidence of the existence of a saving power to render mortal things immortal.

Therefore, belief in a Saviour God rests upon the testimony of the Bible, and the miracles performed by Our Lord; the actual performance of

* As a type, red light is taken as the type of God the Father, blue light of God the Son, and yellow light of God the Holy Ghost.

† Ephesians iv. 6.

which has been ascribed to magic, but never denied, even by writers during the time of his stay on earth, and opposed to Christianity.*

That Jesus Christ was and is God, living and coeternal with God the Father, as Christians and believers in Him we must believe Him to be, although in his earthly nature but perfect man. As reasonable men, crediting the authenticity of the New Testament, we must be fully aware that Christ is the Saviour through whose merits we are accepted of God ; and although in gratitude, in dutiful obedience, as created children, we are bound to render God service, and to perform all our duties in life according to His law,† good acts do not justify us, do not render us acceptable, but are a service which we are of necessity bound to return to the Being who has given us the power of rendering it.

That Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins, and that He will come again to judge the world, as Christians we must also believe.

It can, however, matter little or nothing for our obtaining salvation whether there be a time of our Saviour's temporal kingdom, a millennium, or not. We can search the Scriptures, forming our own judgment, believing what we find there written, and learning for ourselves the power of true conviction.

* 2 Cor.

† Eph. ii. 8.

Our Saviour, while on earth, enjoined the taking of bread and wine, in remembrance of Him—as a proof that we remember that His body and blood was the price paid for our salvation. It is a type in remembrance of the manner of our redemption from sin, in the sight of God to be kept sacred as a request from Jesus-Christ.*

God the Holy Ghost is the sanctifying Spirit we feel within us when in heartfelt prayer, in earnest discourse, or moved by consideration of the greatness of the blessings we possess. The Spirit that chastens us to humility when we are full of mental pride ; that comforts and solaces us with the trust that God will help us in every trial ; that leads us to God in humble faith and hope—is the Spirit of God—The Comforter.†

III. PRAYER.

All Christians believe in the necessity for prayer, and almost all agree as to the form and manner, that it should be after that which is commonly known as “the Lord’s Prayer,” which is the pattern given to us by our God while upon earth. It contains all that is requisite.‡

“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be

* Luke xxii. 19.

† John xiv. 26.

‡ Matt. vi. 9, &c.

thy name," tells us that we are children of God—that we must love Him, and yet reverently fear Him as an almighty Father. The necessity for fearing God is evident from the mention of His judgments with man in the Old Testament—the requirement to love is one of gratitude, of returned love, and adoration, for his ever-continued blessings.

"Thy kingdom come:" we should pray for the coming of the day of judgment (God's kingdom), in the hope that it will be a day of salvation to us, not in fear, but with joy, through faith in our Saviour Christ.

"Thy will be done as in heaven so in earth." Surely it is enjoined upon us to pray for a stricter and better observance of God's wishes, by all His beings; owing as they do their support, the supply of every want, and even their existence alone, to Him.

"Give us, day by day, our daily bread." Have not all of us, rich and poor alike, every reason to acknowledge our dependence upon the Divine Being, for the supply of necessary food, and to ask a continuance of the favour which has heretofore supported? None of us know how soon we may want bread.

"And forgive us our sins." The necessity for asking forgiveness of the great and good Being who has surrounded us by so many blessings, which

we are continually misusing or misapplying, is too obvious to need comment.

“For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.”* Man happily has not the power of remembering for ever, and in death we are obligated to forgive, for we are then unable to resent, and it is in death that we would ask forgiveness at our Creator’s hands. We know, furthermore, that if we do not forgive our fellow-children, as beloved as ourselves, when they err against us, that we cannot in reason ask forgiveness of our heavenly Father for sins committed against His commandments.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”† How much need have we to ask for protection against temptation! How we are beset upon all sides—avarice, and the apparent pleasure gained by riches—idleness—the thousand and one temptations so often presented to us in such unforeseen forms, in such unexpected moments, require that we should ever ask protection from the effects of constantly witnessing the actions of bad persons, and so frequently feeling the power of evil thoughts that will arise in our own minds.

Prayer is the adoration we offer as mortal beings to an immortal One. It is a service that the more educated and intellectual we become, the more we shall see the necessity that it should be rendered.

* Matt. vi. 14, 15.

† James i. 15.

The supreme Spirit is infinite and eternal. Infinite in power we know Him to be by the observation and study of the natural evidences of His existence and of His power being the source of all things in creation.

We observe the heavenly bodies, finding laws to calculate their distance from us, and learn that the azure sky is immeasurable; that some of those little twinkling stars (it may be all) are mighty worlds, very different from, far larger than, our own bright sphere. Some at millions of miles, others at all but infinite distances. Also that the light coming to us from the sun, moon, and each separate star is different;* some possessing properties belonging to red rays, others, only those pertaining to blue ones, while the power of each is relatively different. Some of the planets have atmospheres, others none; while all are possibly inhabited by beings different from, yet as noble in their strength of body, mind, and spirit as ourselves.

If we descend (so to speak) to the infinitesimally small creations around us, we find a single drop of water, teeming with myriads of perfectly-formed living creatures, each one possibly in the possession of respiratory and digestive organs fully formed. (The microscope will reveal such.)

And we shall find not only astounding wisdom

* 1 Cor. xv. 41.

in the adaptability of each to its element and requirements, but beauty in every part; the perfection of finish appearing as complete in the most minute insect as in the largest animal.

Another evidence of an infinite Creator is also a revelation of the microscope. There is a marked similarity in the primary cell or ultimate source of life in all living things, not even excepting the vegetable kingdom.

Such things must be evidence that *one* Being is the Creator and Supporter of all around us, that it is one Spirit evident in all, and that that Spirit is infinite and eternal.

We ourselves only possessing definitely restrained powers of thought and action, and being mortal, must be inferior, owing all to the love of that Spirit; and are of necessity bound to render worship in gratitude and love.

Prayer is likewise a service of love, which we should render to the Spirit we know to be ever present near us, and without the manifestation of whose existence and power we cannot raise a hand or speak a word. As such it should be real, earnest, and in secret. Our Saviour has directed that it should be so—we cannot have higher authority.

We should likewise never repeat the same form of words time after time in addressing God, as is even still vainly done in the Litany of the Church

of England ; * for how many find time to allow their minds to be occupied with other thoughts than those of religion, when all their prayer-book requires of their attention is to repeat " We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord ! " Again, how much of the true simplicity and purity of the Lord's prayer seems lost when vainly repeated four times during Morning Service in the Episcopal Church ! We should ever recollect the possibility of praying without speaking.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed ;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear ;
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

Also, that we can be alone with God in the midst of a crowded assembly ; for thought is ever free, and we can always hold communion in spirit with the Almighty Spirit ever beside us.

Let the place of worship which we may enter be however much unsuited to our taste, or even repugnant to our feelings and ideas of religion, we can inly pray.

For before we condemn the religion, or the form of prayer used by others, we must inquire, we must

* Matt. vi. 16.

search the Scriptures for ourselves, and the more we do so, the more we shall discover the incapacity of any sect to take us in the narrow and strait way which leads to heaven. For all sects are unscriptural; and distinctions made by men, must of necessity, like all other works of men, be imperfect, and partially in error.

Each one must seek and work out his own salvation, finding favour before God by the merits of His Son Jesus Christ.

Regular attendance at church, if unattended with the deep and sincere worship of the heart, is worse than mockery. If we do not feel, upon a sabbath, that we can enter God's house prepared to render the service due to our Creator, and the merciful Dispenser of all the blessings we enjoy; if we do feel that the toil of the past week has rendered us totally unable to attend the formal worship of a church as we should do; it cannot be sin for one of us really so situated, to breathe the fresh atmosphere in place of the close air of a parish church, but thanking God the while inwardly that He in His mercy permits him on one day out of seven to have rest from labour, that may be slowly poisoning the bodily frame.

It seems hard to expect a man working six days out of seven, for a small pittance, in an arsenic factory, to spend even a portion of that seventh day in a crowded church, regularly sabbath after sabbath.

But we must ever remember on the sabbath to pray to God. If absent, through sickness or necessity, from our ordinary place of worship, it is very easy to pray; and we feel inward comfort and satisfaction after prayer.*

Prayer must be fervent and sincere, asking plainly, in our fullest expressed language, for what we desire; earnest, and breathing forth the hidden secrets of the soul, to the God that is beside us, and truly our all in all.

We must ask to be taught how to pray, for it is scarcely possible that our feeble minds can know how to address the Spirit Mind that made and rules the universe.

There can be but few who have earnestly, on bended knees, with deep pleading, asked God for a blessing, for the preservation of themselves or those dear to them, in the name of Jesus Christ, but what have been able to trace God's mercy and His infinite care of them, in the course of the events succeeding that hour of prayer. How better would it be for us all were we ever to have faith in God's power, and invariably first to seek His aid in any time of trial!

Prayer should ever be attended with confession of sin, for God has always been sinned against, and therefore, in asking for mercies from Him, this must be penitently remembered by us.† We

* James v. 15.

† 1 John i. 9.

have no sins which our fellow-men can forgive us ; we can tell our fellow-men what difficulties we meet with, and ask their advice ; but we cannot sin against our fellow-man without sinning against God, the Creator of our fellow-man ; to God we must confess, and to God we must look for forgiveness.

No man has power, or ever will have power, to forgive, or to tell us what will gain forgiveness of our sins, except God, when he became of the nature of a perfect man on earth.

IV. THE BIBLE

The Bible, or "the Book," has been given to man as God's written will, the New Testament being the expressed wishes of our Saviour, as manifested in his life, and in those of his selected apostles.

The Old Testament is undoubtedly an inspired work ; but it is superseded to all Christians by the later and more decidedly given teachings of the New Testament.

Still the Old Testament is absolutely necessary for any form of Christianity ;* for it tells us of the manner of the earth's creation ; informs us of the

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

estate lost by Adam and Eve, and of the promises made at the time of their fall ; and giving us true records of God's apparent conduct towards man, during the earlier periods of the world's history. As such, affording to us at all times ample means for judging of what manner of conduct our own should be, in the every-day transactions of life.

The New Testament is the book, however, upon which a Christian should rest his faith, for from it he can indirectly prove the authenticity of the whole Bible.

The books composing the New Testament were written and compiled in comparatively modern times. Matthew and John* we know to have been apostles and friends of Jesus Christ, and therefore fully acquainted with the sayings and acts of our Saviour while upon earth. Mark and Luke were contemporaries with them. Thus highly qualified, it is not reasonable to suppose that as men, propagating a new religion in a strange country, they would advance anything that was untrue ; and furthermore, false statements would have been of no avail to men who willingly gave up their lives as testimony to the truth of what they advanced.

Again, when these writings were first compiled they were naturally strongly questioned, but when it was found that copies, obtained from different

* John xv. 15.

churches, agreed in all material points, the only differences being such as are usually termed "clerical errors," which arose from the practice at that time in existence of transcription necessary from the want of printing.

Very ancient manuscripts still exist; even yet more ancient ones have existed. All of these are acknowledged to be alike in every material point by every Christian church in the world.

By these very writings all the apostles speak of the Old Testament, and their belief in its truth and that of the prophecies contained therein.

Again, the book speaks for itself, no other work has held a similar position, no other work has been so questioned, and yet retained the same place unaltered, or been found so eminently adapted for every state and condition of mankind.

A strong proof, to a Christian, that the Bible is unaltered is the thought of the improbability of God's permitting His word to be changed by human hands, when His only-begotten Son died upon the cross in fulfilment of prophecy, and thousands have worshipped by its teachings, and died, declaring its divine origin.

In our own country, in the present day, all sects of Christians, even in controversy, appeal to the same translation of the Bible, which, although possibly, even by the seeming acknowledgment of the translators in their dedicatory epistle, is not perfect;

there is no doubt but that every necessary truth of the Christian Religion is correctly rendered therein.

The Bible being the true word of God, we are undoubtedly called upon in it, and by our reason, which He has likewise given us, to endeavour to rise in our knowledge of its contents, more even than in business matters, and to study it, not cursorily but attentively, as a book full of interest, wisdom, and worth.

How many among us have read hundreds of works on serious subjects, and yet never once read the Bible through from beginning to end! How can we be assured of its contents unless we do so; how can we feel certain that the minister we listen to on every sabbath day is not telling us something unconfirmed by the testimony of the Bible?

Each one of us can surely find time to read one chapter each day: if the chapter is unusually long it can be divided into two portions, the latter being reserved for the morrow's perusal. For, like prayer, the reading of the Scriptures should be a portion of our daily occupation.

It is indeed wrong in any one professing Christianity, and of mature age, not to have read the Bible, of all other works, through from beginning to end, especially as it is so easy for a *portion* of Scripture to be grossly misinterpreted, which, when read connectedly, would be found to possess a distinct, and, possibly, very opposite meaning.

It has been said by many that they cannot understand all portions of the Bible. But when God has given us His holy book, and told us to search it (study it), surely we should err not to do all in our power to endeavour to fully understand its contents.

The more we read the Bible and gain knowledge of the works of the Infinite Spirit, visible in man and all creation, the more we shall understand all portions of the sacred volume.

Still no human being can ever perfectly understand the word of God, for it is simply unreasonable to suppose a finite mind can ever fully comprehend the teachings and intentions of an infinite one.

But it is to be clearly understood by all of us that God in His great mercy has caused His inspired works to be so written that a weak mind can comprehend the plan of salvation so far as needful, while the most powerful intellect can find labour and pleasure in studying the perfect adaptation of the system to the intended purpose.

If we do not understand a passage while engaged in reading the Bible, and the given references do not explain it,—we can read on—another passage may shortly occur to our notice to elucidate it; but if not, and we ask, God will always, in some strangely unforeseen manner, explain the apparently *hidden meaning* of His words.

V. THE DUTIES OF LIFE.

That religion is alone intended for the sabbath for one hour, or half hour of prayer, each day set apart, dedicated to our God, is an error we are all too apt to fall into,—too willing to credit.

The Spirit of God is ever beside us, and that Spirit is a mind—a mind so subtle in its apprehension, so perfect in its all-pervading power, that we cannot think without asking and receiving ability to perform even the all but imperceptible act of thought.

In our every-day duties, in our business with our fellow-men, in our transactions with our masters, our workpeople or servants, how readily we forget that God is ever near, with what ease we calm God's monitor within us, and act as other men!

Religion, the worship of a spirit, from whom all things, our very lives, are lent to us as means by which we can render service unto Him, cannot be a worship that can be performed by attendance at His house on one day out of the week, by prayer during one hour out of the day.

God is continually giving evidence of His love to us,* we are ever near Him, and within the in-

* 1 John iv. 16.

fluence of His holy protecting Spirit. Our minds and lives are His—we are His creatures, made and sustained by Him ; our clothing and our homes are from Him ; then surely should not all be rendered unto Him,—dedicated in service to His glory ?

As it is possible, it must be but just and proper, that every action of our lives should be made a part of our religion ; that every business transaction should become an aid to the working out of our own salvation.

Is not the man of business called upon as a Christian to be diligent in his business,* to be sober, to be honest to his fellow-man, to be persevering and industrious,—kind to his wife and family, to be feeling and considerate in all his actions, patient under reverses, and to ask assistance from God not at stated periods, but continually.

Prayer, as we have before seen, can be silent, why not then in the moment of disaster pray inly to the Spirit ever 'near, to the God who grants us power to think the prayer ?

The belief that God, who loves us with a love that no human being could return or imagine, is with us at all times, in the sunbeam that wakes us to another day, in the bustle of our midday toil, in the hour of hallowed evening rest—will *make us feel* called upon at all times to bear Him

* Rom. xii. 11.

in mind,—at all times to be earnest in endeavouring to please Him.

God's constant presence should give us a feeling of pleasure, trust, and confidence, for true religion has nothing in it but what should produce gladness. There is no necessity for a stern countenance on the part of the most religious man, for he may enter freely into the joys and pleasures of those around him so far as he finds his reason and the wishes of the God he desires to please will permit, as made known to him by the New Testament.

Every rational creature can readily find opportunities for doing good, where all his fellow-beings are God's creatures, like himself, and when everything is directly or indirectly a creation of His own Maker. Every one can use His gifts, all they possess, to the glory of God, and thus, by doing their duty to their neighbour and to God, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."*

Servants are doing their duty to their Creator by being obedient to their masters, attentive to their wants, civil in their answers at all times, by keeping their hands from purloining, and themselves strictly sober.†

A servant, by diligence and fidelity to his master, is not only improving and qualifying himself for a somewhat higher station in life, but is also most

* Mark xii. 17.

† Titus ii. 9.

assuredly laying up treasure in heaven ; in plainer terms, doing much towards saving his own soul.

Every act of honesty under temptation, from the feeling that it should be done because it is right in the sight of God, and from trust in His love and confidence that He will reward it, is a great act of true religion.

Fellow-servants, for we all have service to render to God, how much easier does religion become when every action may become a portion of the good work ? How much easier it is to toil patiently, when we know, although we may be toiling in lowly capacities here, that the toil being sent from God, the power to do it from God ; there is the same ability for serving, equal facility for attaining heaven, and showing our love for God, by being honest, sober, and diligent as a servant, as in the highest station attainable by man.

Children can understand the great principles of the Christian religion when they are very young ; they can be taught to believe that there is a merciful God who created them and all the world, and that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour from death—our forefathers and ourselves being punished with it for having been wicked. That Christ died for us, and has risen to heaven, but will come again to judge the world ; to reward the good, and punish the bad.

They can also understand at an early age that

God is everywhere, can see everything, and is all powerful. That 'He loves us all and that we must love Him, and do our utmost to do all that we do so as to please Him.* Children can read the Bible as readily as another book, and can soon so learn themselves that it is God's book, and that in it He tells them to honour and obey their parents. All these are the main truths of Christianity, and it is surely the duty of every parent to make their children acquainted with these all-important facts so soon as ever they can understand their meaning and value.

Young persons : the boy at school can easily understand that his life is but a loan from God, and that it is possible and requisite for him to serve the Giver of life and all blessings, in endeavouring to improve the talents which have been given to him, and that in pursuing his studies assiduously, in rendering obedience to his parents and masters, in making himself better acquainted with nature and the laws evident in her creation, he not only qualifies himself for the duties of life, as an honest man of business, but for working out his own salvation and eternal happiness.

To those young persons who have just entered upon life, whose school-days have passed, and whose career seems brightly dawning before them, it sometimes seems hard to say "Be religious, for

* Col. iii. 20.

remember your whole life must be one act of service to God, and that however well, however strong you may now feel ; death will come either as a blessing or otherwise according as you may have acted."

To the young man, the denizen of a mighty city, to him seemingly full of pleasure and amusements it would be hard, it would be wrong to say, "Be always serious and studious, never dance, never go to *any* place of amusement."

A young man is called upon to enter fully into all the duties of life : his ability of assisting his fellow-creatures, his power of doing good, the proper improvement and cultivation of his talents, all depend upon the knowledge he possesses of the requirements of the millions around him.

Dissipation, at first sight to an inexperienced youth so temptingly full of enjoyment is not so.* If it is hard to believe that it is not, ask of those who have tried, possessed, and lost all that dissipation can give. It is indeed time worse than lost, the loans of health, youth, talents, life, and an immortal soul all thrown away ; and be it remembered all of these must be strictly answered for, and an account, of necessity a true one, of the purposes to which they have been put will be required. That there is a hereafter, that there is a heaven and hell, none but an atheist would deny, and if

* Prov. vii. 24.

these are to last for eternity, for time without end, surely even to the mere seeker of pleasure, an eternity of pleasure is worth a few years of service to a God of love, rather than a few years at most of imaginary pleasure to prelude unimaginable remorse and pain.

But the world does not afford real pleasure to a thoughtless man, the night of dissipation brings the morning of indisposition. The bed of sickness will come some day without one joy to relieve the tedious hours, without one subject of real worth for the mind to dwell upon, and most probably without one sincere friend to watch the sufferer's wants.

On the other hand, a young man entering on life, striving to improve himself in knowledge, learning all that he can of God's works, not from curiosity, but from a desire to be able to judge for himself of the truth of the statements of those around him ; enjoying good health because his constitution is not injured by his recreations ; able to visit places of amusement and instruction from time to time ; unsatiated with them, and with knowledge, and health, such as to make them doubly agreeable — will surely by degrees find himself becoming a useful member of society, a proficient in pleasing knowledge, and courted on all hands as an agreeable, cheerful, and yet well-conducted companion.

There is nothing in Christianity to make a young man always serious, or to interfere with his being

the most perfect gentleman in his manners. In fact, true religion should and does make a man cheerful : for it gives him protection from many sources of annoyance. Sickness becomes easier to bear, for the mind has then comfort and occupation in the feeling that God is never absent,—that one loving friend never ceases to watch over us. Death is undreaded, for what have those to fear who have always tried to do their best, and have faith in our Saviour's power to save? Death is powerless where there is no sin ; Christ overcame death as perfect man, and it is sin alone that makes it terrible to mankind in general.*

Young men too frequently dislike marriage, thinking that it will bring upon them the ridicule of their companions, and place themselves under restraint and expense. An early marriage is, however, desirable, for it saves any one from a thousand and one excuses for acting wrongly ; for a young man, looking forward to marriage with a virtuous, well-disposed woman, has an aim and object in view, that will make him careful, sober, and industrious—that will make him seek the company of one, who should and probably will aid him to become a good man.

And a woman has her duty to perform in using a woman's influence for good over the stronger passions of man. While in marriage they are

* 1 Cor. xv. 56.

† Prov. xviii. 22.

called upon to assist each other in strengthening good intentions into acts, and to aid each other in overcoming whatever temptations may cross their path through life.*

A woman must ever remember that a portion of her mission on earth is to endeavour gently to lead her husband in conversation to speak of religion, and to think of it as fitting his attention. She can plead when no other can, and often will turn a man to the worship of God who would never of his own accord have opened a Bible or have entered a place of Christian worship.†

In marriage, as in everything else, every act can be done for God's service; everything we are called upon to perform to each other, to our children, can be done well, and by doing it well, by acting and thinking kindly toward all, we worship God; for we are His, and if our acts are such as He would wish, they are acts in His service and tending to His glory.

The best and noblest of man's passions is called into existence when marriage is what it should be—the unison of two spirits in love to God; and it is indeed the highest and best of man's estates, when it becomes the complete accordance of two in their desire to assist each other to attain Heaven.

To the man of business, rising early that he may prolong the day for work as much as possible, retir-

* Titus ii. 4.

† 1 Cor. vii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 1.

ing late to rest for the same purpose, a man who finds it difficult, with all his toil and industry, to provide for the wants of his family, it seems all but impossible to unite religion with his daily labours—with every transaction in which he takes part during the day. But in reality it is not so, for the Spirit we worship, though unseen, is ever beside us, in purity and love, sustaining and watching over our every movement. Is it not possible at times throughout the day, in thought, if not in word, to address God, although it be but for one moment, to ask his assistance when we feel we are about to commit a wrong act? Can we not in thought, when brought near temptation, endeavour to remove our minds from it, inly asking for Divine assistance, and praying that everything we do may become an evidence of our love, our worship to the immortal Spirit, who gives the power to perform, the strength of mind to propose the action?

Cannot everything be done well, patiently, and honestly? Would it not make our labours easier to us, if we always felt as we should feel, that we are, when we do well, not only doing our duty, and manifesting love to our fellow-man, but our duty, and manifesting love to our God, and that we can by these means hope to gain the salvation promised and justified to us through our Saviour *Jesus Christ*?

How much better it is to ask for and feel confidence in the power of God's assistance at all times, striving always to bear in mind, that we are no exception to the rest of mankind, that we have souls and must render them to God, and also return to Him an account of the use made of the talents He has mercifully lent us as a means to prove our willingness to endeavour at all times to return His love and gain heaven !

In each particular business there are ways and acts—in other words talents, which afford us means for proving that we endeavour constantly to remember God ; means for praying without ceasing, not by words alone but by our deeds : thus proving how anxious we are to obtain favour and redemption in the sight of God. Let us take some few instances.*

The Christian schoolmaster has perhaps next to the Christian minister the most apparent means for spreading good thoughts and inculcating proper ideas on religion, and its hourly requirements. Still the tradesman can be honest in his transactions, restraining himself from adulterating the articles he disposes of to his neighbours, can be kind to his wife and family, considerate to his friends.† While the farmer can be thoughtful for his farm servants, mindful of their necessities in winter, and tender-hearted in the treatment of the animals that help him to his livelihood. The

* 1 Thess. v. 17.

† Luke vi. 38.

captain at sea can relieve as far as possible the discomforts of his passengers and crew, and is called on to see that amid the vicissitudes of a life on shipboard there is some time devoted to the worship of God. The governess, who so hardly earns her pittance, can render her service patiently and diligently, knowing that what God deems good it is not for human beings to call wrong. The beggar can do his utmost to improve his condition, and in asking alms can restrain his tongue from exaggeration. The noble can enter earnestly into the work of benefiting those who require his aid, he may ascertain for himself that his tenants are not harshly treated by agents, and that there is no case of real distress within or near the precincts of his property unrelieved. If in parliament, he may act honestly by his constituents, endeavouring to introduce legislative acts that he is convinced would assist the wellbeing and moral tone of the country. While the man of books and learning can impart knowledge to his fellow-men, so that they, like himself, may see in all things the handiwork of God. Each alike—each one equal in the sight of God—each with an immortal soul to save, can make their every action a religious one, tending not only to the furtherance of their worldly position, but also to their spiritual welfare.

Thus to blend real life and religion, thus to

make ourselves at all times servants of God, will bring with it its reward. We shall feel more apparently, that God is ever beside us, and see in religion if in no other relationship the possibility of equality among all. The weak mind being equally capable of worshipping with the most powerful, and the weak body of rendering service as good and as acceptable, as the work of the strongest. All will alike feel inward satisfaction in the knowledge of the feeling that they are doing good, and in the joy unspeakable brought to us through the Holy Spirit's love.

In old age, when the hand trembles, and the eye grows dim, we feel that we should and must think of a hereafter and a service to God. Life is so uncertain that none of us should feel otherwise than as if there was, as there is, a possibility that before the rise of another sun, we may be numbered with those who have been and gone.

The elder members of a family can be, and usually are, the guides of the younger ones, for better or for worse; how readily, then, can they show their willingness to serve the Immortal Spirit who has sustained them for so many years! * How easily can they advise and aid those around them, from falling into errors they may possibly themselves have committed! And surely it must be a great source of satisfaction to the head of a

* Titus ii. 2.

family, to feel that he has taught lessons, and inculcated good thoughts, that will be remembered long after he has passed away from this world.

In a former passage we have seen that it is sinful for a young person to be drunken and dissipated, how much worse is it for old persons to be so, for they are those who should be examples for good to those who are to succeed them in life.

To the old, serving God cannot be difficult, much more impossible. Usually without an active calling, with time for the perusal of God's word, freed from bodily passion, they are alone asked to be patient under suffering, exemplary in their conduct, ever ready to do their utmost to advise those around them, as they believe, for the best, and constantly to watch, as parents, the gifts which God has given them in children, for He will assuredly require an account of how the loan of bodies, minds, and souls, intrusted to their care, has been tended.

Among the duties of life, we must remember distinctly, that we are called upon to attend God's house regularly, not from habit, custom, or fashion, but to pray; to join with our fellow-Christians in thanking Him for mercies granted, in praying for blessings we desire.*

Nothing but sickness or strict necessity should ever make us neglect attendance on divine wor-

* Matt. xviii. 20.

ship; not only for the sake of example, but to prove that we worship God in public, and are not ashamed of being Christians.

Another duty, and in one point of view the most important of all, is that of charity in thought, word, and act, at all times, towards our fellow-men, which is possible to every one, for none are so poor but that they can afford to be charitable.

We may not possess wealth to give away for charitable purposes; we may scarcely have time for the needful avocations we follow, to obtain food for ourselves and our families. We may not at first sight see a direct means for our being charitable, in the usual acceptation of the word; but upon closer consideration is it not possible to be charitable without wealth, or even direct opportunities?*

Surely we can, although without money, follow the example of Peter's conduct to the cripple, and assist those weaker than ourselves by such means as are in our power.

Charity distinctly does not alone consist in giving money, for it is as charitable, and frequently more so, to lead a blind man across a crowded thoroughfare, give a hungry one a crust of bread, or watch beside a sick brother's bed, as to present thousands to a public hospital.

True charity is invariably performed as quietly as possible; if you give halfpence in the street, do it

* Acts iii. 6.

so as not to attract observation; if you subscribe to what you deem to be a good purpose, send your subscription under an initial, or an assumed motto; for there is no charity in advertising seeming deeds of liberality.*

Again, how few among us there are who can find time to visit the poor around us!—yet, for young and active men, and even in many instances for women, there can scarcely be any religious duty that should have greater claims upon their attention. In visiting the poor we must, however, remember not to choose the cleanest and best for objects of our attention; but our mission must be to the worst, poorest, and dirtiest; for their requirements are the greatest.

But still charity can be manifested in our own homes. We may have afflicted relations; to be kind to them is charity. To assist our aged parents to walk in the sunshine of a summer day—supporting their tottering footsteps hour after hour; to read to them—bearing patiently with their irritability of temper; and to smoothe their pillow when they sink to rest, is charity.

Upon a burning summer day, when the ground is parched by the heat, the foliage of the high trees drooping for want of moisture, when the roadway is dusty, and the air suffused with the dust in the blaze of an August sun, and we see a little child

* Matt. vi. 1.

dragging its gleanings home from the harvest field, its pulse fevered, and its little face and hands scorched with the heat, and we feel compassion, remembering our Saviour's words, and call the child to our door, take it into our house in the shade, tell the little one "to rest," and give it a cup of milk to drink, bidding it welcome, that is charity.*

There are always ways and opportunities to all of us for being charitable, in word, if not in deed, by restraining our tongues from speaking otherwise than kindly of those around us, and by always remembering that we ourselves have faults, and that it is possible that those who are thought bad by man are good in the sight of God.

It is usually impossible for one human being to judge of the motives which direct the actions of another, so it must therefore be impossible to tell whether an action apparently wrong is done from an innocent intention, or otherwise; then certainly we should never uncharitably judge or speak of another's actions as wrong while there is a possibility of their being good.

To possess a fellow-feeling towards our fellow-men, to feel that the condemned felon may possess traits in his character equal to some in our own; to be liberal towards, and to endeavour to forward the interests of all around us—to continue

* Matt. x. 42.

friendship alike in poverty as in prosperity, is charitable.

It is charitable to enter actively into life, aiding all who require aid, and learning how we best can aid them ; but to shut ourselves up from the world for the imaginary service of God—never mixing in it to endeavour to show an example, or participate in and sympathise with the trials and anxieties of our fellow-creatures, is wrong.

We need not stop to think if the object of our intended charity is all that he seems to be ; for if the act is done with the intention of doing good, we are doing a good action, and we are promised that we shall be rewarded for such an act.

Therefore, once again, we can distinctly understand that charity does not alone consist—in fact, may not in any way be connected—with the giving away of our riches, however plenteously ; but more in being considerate and kind in every thought, word, and action, and in doing our utmost practically to benefit all with whom we come in contact.*

VI. OF RELIGION.

Religion—true religion—is progressive ; and it is not tenable that the early Christians, with their illiterateness and simplicity of manners, required

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

the same high tone of resolve to keep from the temptation of making religion a mere form, or the following of sects, not then in existence, or had as clear an idea of creation, and the probable manner of the earth's destruction, although by inspiration some of them clearly spoke of it, as we have in the present day.

The formality belonging to the earlier Christian worship was necessarily very small in comparison to the ceremonies appertaining to churches in the present day. Few in number, and perhaps scattered over a large city, their meetings were in secret, usually at night; but in place of a brilliantly illumined cathedral their place of worship was most probably a half-deserted dwelling, or even tomb. On entering, each would recognize the other, for each would be a personal friend; and the form of worship would at most be prayers from an elder, devoutly responded to, and repeated by all present: the only light used probably being that of a few oil lamps.

All would pray; all would feel that they were engaged upon a service of love—a service which required faith and hope, while all would alike feel answered, and assured that the Spirit of God was indeed around them, and with them.

But in the present day, when the house of God is adorned as richly as the Jewish; when the ceremonies and forms are frequently copied from

the Jews, and the larger portion of the service is read alone by the officiating priest; when the sermon possibly will say but little of how we can in real life—how each one of us in his respective calling can—worship God daily; is there not some danger of our forgetting that the all-present Spirit we worship is beside us even while we pray?—is there not some danger of mistaking ceremony and form for reality?

That the house of God should be worthy of its purpose—that all about it should be of the best kind, although but simply, and anything but gaudily adorned, can be but right. That there should be some set form of worship is absolutely necessary. But we must certainly remember that the building in which we are, and the set form of prayer, has no part with the mental—all but spiritual devotion, we render up to a Being who knows our inmost thoughts. It may be an evidence of love toward God to adorn His house, to expend labour, time, and money, upon its decoration: but prayer is as effectual in the humblest cot as in the noblest cathedral.

It may seem hard to abstract the mind from the world during the formal service of a large church, to hold perfect communion in our prayers with God,—also difficult to *feel* prayers that we have very frequently heard repeated; but it is possible, *and the oftener* we do it the easier it will become,

and the greater pleasure we shall take in its proper performance.

We are some of us again far too apt to think that we rightly observe the Sabbath, and even the whole religious duty of the week, if we attend divine service in God's house twice during His day. Never possibly thinking that the only great sin we may have committed was in thus attending divine service; simply from our having gone to church not thinking of the purpose we went there for, and while there mechanically repeating the responses, our minds being occupied elsewhere.

To draw the mind away to religious thoughts when engaged on religious duties, and to do all things to the intent that they may be religiously done in the love of God and man, is true religion.*

True religion is not difficult in performance, and our Saviour was justified in calling his yoke easy; every action affording an opportunity of performing a good act, rendering worship, and ascending that path which by Christ's intercession leads to heaven.†

We are told that the way is broad which leadeth to destruction; and when we know how many thousands openly live in sin in London alone, and how strong the temptations are for thousands more to do the same, we can believe this to be true. But the possibility that we ourselves are treading in that broad way but seldom if ever occurs to our minds.‡

* John iv. 23.

† Matt. xi. 30.

‡ Matt. vii. 13.

However, when we consider that most of us believe one sect of Christians to be alone possessed of the one true way of obtaining salvation, and that all other persons are doing wrong, if not rendering themselves liable to the pains of hell by following the teachings of other sects; such a feeling or belief can scarcely, to say the least, be charitable towards those who are, like ourselves, believers in Christ, and therefore fellow-Christians.

And again, is there no possibility of all sects being wrong, when sectarianism comes from man, and there was only one religion, and that, one of love, given us and taught by Jesus Christ? Are the bishops and possessors of three or four separate livings (probably hundreds of miles apart) in the Church of England taking no thought or care for the morrow? Are the Roman Catholics treating Mary the mother of our Saviour as an ordinary although highly-honoured woman? Are the Presbyterians charitable in speaking of their fellow-Christians? and can the Baptists have calmly passed after mature consideration the opinion that total immersion in water has aught to do with salvation? Are Calvinists willing to become as little children, humbly receiving the teaching of the Book of God, and willing to grant the possibility of their weak judgments being wrong?

The religion of Christ is not the religion of *Christendom*, of the crusades, of war and animosity.

sity ; it is a religion of love, to all alike, a religion of love and charity, towards those who disagree with us in opinion, as well as to those who concur with us in everything.* We may not condemn a Christian, although we are called upon to put aside paganism in every form.

Now we may, in applying the necessity for religion in all our acts to ourselves, endeavour to trace, as nearly as possible (we are but human), what should be the conduct in life, and the religion of a truly Christian man.

A Christian, as his name implies, believing in Christ as God incarnate, believing Him to be perfect man, the seed of woman not of man (in fulfilment of prophecy), begotten by a miracle, and the one perfect pattern for all men to follow in their actions—a Christian, believing in God, cannot see the beautiful world of nature that surrounds him ; the sky of purest blue, but an infinity of space and gloom, on which God has caused light so to act as to give us such coloured rays, only as are most beneficial ; animals, whose source of life is, as it should be, a mysterious evidence of an all-sustaining power—whose nervous systems lead us to study and to think, while their bones and muscles are formed with such a knowledge of mechanical principles as no mortal can ever hope to attain ; trees, the sap of which ascends and

* John xv. 12.

descends each year, to suit the requirements of man upon the atmosphere in which they are placed, and whose every leaf contains a lesson in the green pulse, which slowly circulates throughout its tissue ; flowers, whose beauty every child admires, and which are useful alike to insects and ourselves, while they tell us of our birth, our lives, and quickly-coming death ;* even the busy men crowding in the streets, each in his own peculiar strength struggling for existence or pre-eminence—each man different in aspect, form, and countenance, yet the same structure for all, the same evidence of the one Creator ; the atmosphere with such wisely given laws for the suffusing of the impure portions with the pure, for the rising of the heated breath and succeeding of the cool refreshing air : without feeling that there is not only a God ruling us all in power and glory, but that He is a sustaining Spirit full of forethought, mercy, and love for mankind.

Believing in the power of the Holy Spirit to lighten our sorrows here upon earth,—believing in the willingness of God to hear the earnest prayer of any one who will thus pray to Him,—a Christian will invariably, first in the time of trial, seek assistance and advice from God in prayer, before asking it from his worldly friends.

A Christian man would feel called upon to pray

* Psa. ciii. 15.

and thank God at least, upon rising from and retiring to rest each day, and himself read or have read aloud, before all the members of his family, a portion of the Holy Scriptures every day, remembering that, during the time of prayer, master, children, and servants are all equal.

But a Christian will also carry religion into real life ; he will treat all with kindness, he will be considerate for the weakness of a wife, the youth and natural gaiety of children, the thoughtlessness of servants, endeavouring to act towards all, it may be, with required firmness, but kindly trying to show that, although there are distinctions in worldly rank, all are equal in the sight of God.

Again, a Christian must feel called upon to be industrious, sober, persevering, and honest in all his transactions, looking for the natural flowers that are to be found amid the ruggedness of real life ; one who is willing to try to help those who cannot help themselves, punctual and true to all given promises, and withal, a sincere friend in adversity to those he has known in happier days.

A true Christian is regardless of wealth ; if he should possess it he holds a blessing that affords an opportunity for doing good to those poorer,—not by giving a note and taking no further trouble, but by diligently seeking worthy objects, and giving to them in as considerate and kind a manner as possible.

A Christian's house will be well regulated, in

charitable consideration for the comfort of servants and those who dwell in it; clean because he is commanded to have it so, but in no way more ostentatious than his means will fully permit. Possibly, if an educated man, his house will be found to be replete with works evincing good taste in literature and the fine arts, although, of necessity, many fine paintings (such as represent God in the form of an old man) would be excluded as wholly inconsistent with the worship of the Spirit who animates the universe. A regular attendant, as far as possible with the incidental circumstances of life, at divine worship each sabbath. A Christian surely would endeavour upon the one day out of the seven to do the utmost to make it a day of rest to all within his household, and so arrange as to enable each member of it to attend divine service at least once during that day.

The profession of Christianity, in society, in pleasure and amusements, has nothing in it to make a man reserved, solemn, or severe, in his manner or speech. The world is given us to enjoy (not to abuse), as rational creatures, capable of mentally and physically enjoying almost everything. A Christian can enter, in fact is called upon to enter, into friendship or acquaintance with all around him; with good estimable persons, in friendship, that he may improve himself by their conversation and experience; with others, that he may

endeavour unpretendingly to persuade them to consider the possibility of its being, in every point of view, not only wrong, but impolitic to do evil.

As a husband, brother, and friend, a truly Christian man will ever feel bound to do his utmost to be affectionate and kind, especially in the hour of trial or anxiety.

As a parent, a Christian is called upon to endeavour to cherish religious thoughts of love, of hope, of faith, and kindness in all his children ; and there is one axiom ever to be remembered by a parent,—“ Never to tell a child an untruth,” for of all others, a parent should be the last to awaken a child’s mind to the falsity of his own nature.

In old age, a Christian will be still advising and assisting his fellow-men—still hoping for himself, and still preparing to meet death, and when he does meet it, it comes as a blessing from his God.

It is far too customary with many of us to speak of “ life ” or “ the world ” as a place to which we have been transported to eke out an existence, labouring hard, daily called upon to surmount obstacles, subject to pain, disease, mental misery, and death. And yet, beside this, always striving against temptations that we cannot entirely overcome.

But how different does the world, does the prospect of death, become by the aid of religion ! For we are sent into the world to show our love toward God, the giver of our lives, and that by so doing

we may gain the Heaven promised to us after the fall of our first parents.

The world, with true religion, becomes a hallowed sphere for good actions ; each trial against temptation becomes a strengthening of the spirit against it ; each action becomes an act of willingly-granted service, in love to the Spirit source of love ; each hope becomes fulfilled through faith ; each failing but brings us in prayer to closer communion with our God ; each good deed brings its own reward, in feelings of happiness on earth, in the certainty of reward hereafter.

Death becomes a mercy—more, a blessing ; for it relieves us from the anxieties of this world, and saves us from the possibility of suffering more than a certain portion of bodily pain ; for no sooner does pain become too great for human nature, than the portion of spirit which sustained us, is recalled to the Immortal Power to which it appertained.

There are passages in Scripture which speak of the coming of the day of judgment. Death is that day to all of us, for our actions for good or bad, our prayers and thanksgivings, all must terminate on this side of the grave. When the dust of the earth, or billows of the ocean, are over us, it is too late to repent, for in death we do assuredly meet the judgment day of our God.

It matters not, with regard to our every-day *actions*, *whether there be a Millenium or not*,

before the last day on earth. But the New Testament says, "the good rise first." Our Saviour Jesus Christ has conquered death, and we can believe that His accepted worshippers conquer death also, through his merits. That the wicked do not meet their doom till the day of judgment, we can also believe, for they are spoken of as dead, and their doom as everlasting death.*

We are told by an apostle that the world will be destroyed by fire; many deem this to be a mere typical description of purification. It may be only a type, but the words scarcely bear any other than a literal rendering, and the better we become acquainted with the structure of the interior of this earth, and the nature of the gases composing its atmosphere, the more do we feel that fire will be the destroying agent in God's hand at the last day. That there will be a new heaven, and new earth, we are also distinctly told, after the last day has passed, and time merged into eternity.†

Let us remember we must all die; none of us know when; but shortly, and when we are called it is to the day of judgment.

At the last, when upon each foot of dry land, upon this earth, there shall stand a being to be judged. When man shall stand in the presence of his Creator—of the Spirit to whom he owes everything he has imagined or possessed in life.

* 1 Thess. iv. 14. Rom. vi. 23.

† 2 Peter iii. 10.

How very little, how empty will the pleasures seem, for which some of us have misspent a life, and lost a soul, both loans from a loving God! At such a time, remorse, grief, and disappointment, at our madness during life, would alone form a hell, without the bodily sufferings entailed by sin.

On the other hand, we see promised a fuller manifestation of the loving Jehovah than some of us have ever known, ever felt to be present in the love displayed in our own selves, in our fellow-men, and in the world by which we have been surrounded.

A heaven that shall never perish. An infinity and eternity of reciprocating love; of adoration to the eternal God of all.

Everlasting happiness in adoring, in beholding the infinity of creation, with a perfect form and mind,* knowing the joy, peace, and harmony existent throughout the worlds, of whose form or manner of creation man cannot imagine.

To such a reward, with a religion founded on God's word, and rational conviction from the world around us, in faith, in hope, in love to God and man, are Christians called, with the knowledge that He who saved us cometh quickly; may we all feel able to say with the beloved apostle—Even so come, Lord Jesus.

* 1 Cor. xv. 49.

VII. OF CONTROVERSY.

Controversy should be avoided, if possible, so far as it tends to argument and wrangling, for there can be no religion in quarrelling as to which is the right religion.

If we have doubts as to the correctness of the views upon religion held by others, we can endeavour to persuade them to inquire from the Scriptures as to the grounds of their belief, and possibly we may discover from their inquiry that we ourselves were in error.

If we perceive any around us simply following a peculiar sect, because their parents did so before them, and not from conviction, we are called upon to persuade them to inquire earnestly for themselves.

In controversy, it is never advisable for us to deduce anything from the Book of Revelation, for no person has yet clearly explained that inspired work of prophecy. Nor is it probable that it will be understood until the last day, when the completion of all prophesied of by it will be a finally convincing testimony of God's wishes having been fully made known to man.

When we speak to others upon religion we ought never to consider that we are one iota better than those whom we address, nor are we to lead

them to think that we of ourselves can teach them the true way of salvation. But only persuade others to seek, as we may have sought, to discover true religion from the Bible, and the Spirit of God through prayer, and the mediation of Jesus Christ.

If we converse with others whom we know openly to be doing wrong, and acting in a contrary way to the teachings of the Bible, we can endeavour, not arrogantly, but as a friend, to persuade them to act otherwise ; but we must do all things in charity.

Argument may be multiplied on argument in many instances, without effect, when a kind act will produce what nothing else would, and our example should ever be such as to show the consistency of our professions.

If asked to attend the peculiar worship of a particular sect, that we may be convinced of its greater closeness to the true spirit of Christian prayer, it is well not to refuse, for although *one* place of worship should be as a rule regularly attended, there is always a possibility of learning.

There are few who can say much in defence of sectarianism, or in furtherance of all the principles of any one sect ; but there should be no Christian unable, with the aid of his Bible, to give ample reasons for believing in the Christian faith, as taught to all in the New Testament.



1

